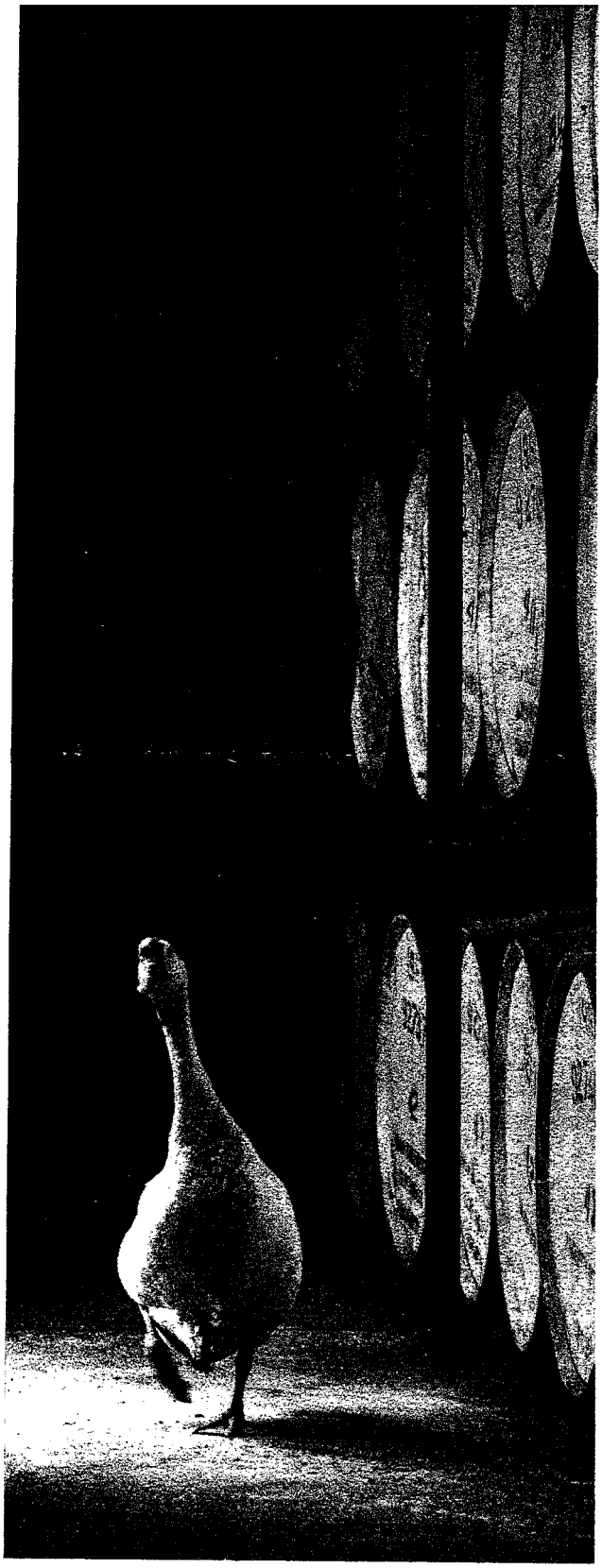
Famous as sentries, geese take on a new kind of watch

The Scotch Guards

Goose-stepping through a warehouse full of whisky, a member of Dumbarton's Goose Patrol marches vigilantly on her appointed rounds. Her name is Clementine and she is one of a gaggle of 50 geese that stand sentinel duty over 30 million gallons of spirits in a Scottish warehouse. Keener of ear and sharper of eye than any dog, and twice as quick tempered, geese have a long and distinguished history as guards. They once saved ancient Rome from the Gauls by awakening the capital's garrison with their cackles, and only a few years ago they were used as sentinels on lonely British outposts in Malaya.

The Scottish gooseguard dates back to 1959 when two humans needed help in patrolling the 38-acre Ballantine plant. A crusty, autocratic gander and five female companions were enlisted and proved so reliable that the staff was enlarged to its present size. So far they have had a perfect record: there have been no thefts. But there was a flap last winter when Clementine disappeared and it was feared she had been abducted for someone's Christmas dinner. But a few weeks later she was discovered wandering forlornly along the shores of Loch Lomond. She is now back on the Scotch Watch Patrol, a sadder and less silly goose.



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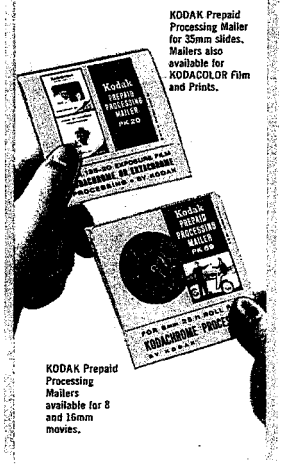

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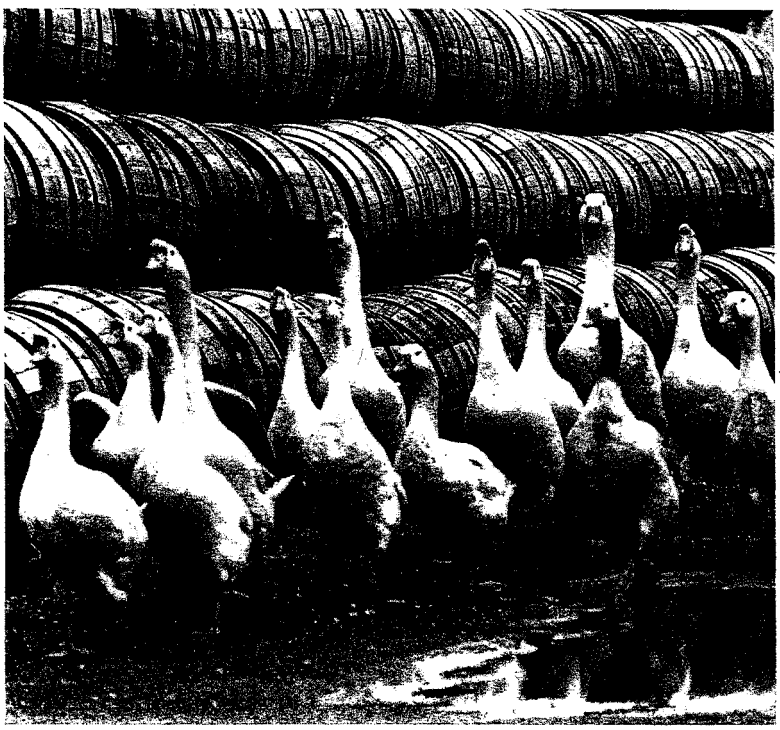

The guard steps smartly by piles of whisky casks (*above*). Night or day some of the flock is always awake since geese tend to catnap at odd hours. When they come upon an intruder—the photographer—they hiss and scream (*below*). They have raised the alarm on several occasions and driven off prowlers.